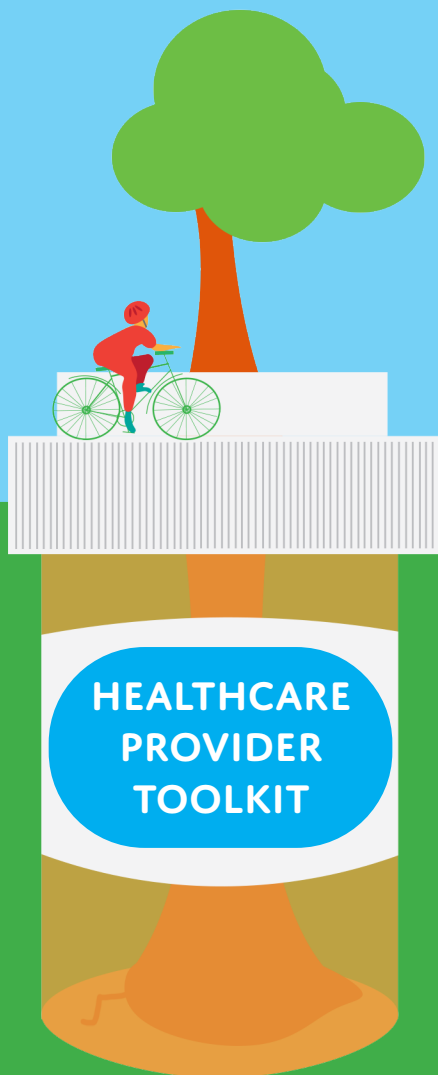




# PARDX

An Austin Parks and Recreation Department Health Promotions Program



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Reasonable modification and equal access to communications will be provided upon request. For assistance please contact (512)974-3914 or Relay Texas 7-1-1.



## **WHAT IS A PARKS PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM?**

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- Letter from the Director of the City of Austin Parks & Recreation Department
- Steps
- Letter from students

## **WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?**

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- Benefits of time in nature
- Success Stories Nationwide
- Community need
- Overcoming Barriers

## **HOW TO INTEGRATE THE PARKS PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM INTO YOUR CLINIC.**

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- Assess your patient
- Give PARDRX Material Provided
- Follow-up



## City of Austin

Austin Parks and Recreation Department  
200 South Lamar Boulevard, Austin, Texas 78704

February 12, 2025

RE: Parks Prescription Program

Dear Health Care Provider,

The City of Austin Parks & Recreation Department (PARC) is devoted to promoting healthy lifestyles in our community. Scientific studies consistently affirm what PARC has observed to be true – spending time outdoors, especially in natural settings, has significant health benefits. The attached brochure describes these benefits and ways to improve both the physical and mental well-being of individuals.

The Parks Prescription Program was created to support our mutual goal of nurturing a healthy and active community. It is our hope that these tools will help you to encourage healthy lifestyles among your patients. The Parks Prescription Program can share information on the nature and park resources available in Austin as well as the health benefits of spending time in these spaces.

PARC also supports the Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative, a worldwide campaign to encourage healthy outdoor activities while appreciating and caring for parks and open spaces. Park patrons have access to nature, sports, culture, and recreation through our more than 20,000 acres of green space, 300 parks, 227 miles of trails, 26 recreation/senior centers, 35 swimming pools and much more. Our many trails offer space for walking, biking or meditation; picnic areas provide a space for family gatherings adjacent to playgrounds and sports fields.

Further, our free or low-cost recreational programs promote physical activity, social connection, learning and outdoor enjoyment. Most importantly, PARC has a dedicated staff to collaborate with you.

Great advances in healthcare result from collective efforts for change. Thank you for joining us in this movement to integrate Austin's natural environment with patient care.

For additional information, please feel free to contact Jill-Habegger-Cain, Recreation Program Coordinator- Health Promotions, by phone at (512) 974-3907 or by email at [Jill.Habegger-Cain@austintexas.gov](mailto:Jill.Habegger-Cain@austintexas.gov).

Thank you,

Jesús Aguirre, MBA, CPRE, Director  
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

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# WHAT IS THE PARKS PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM?

The purpose of the Parks Prescription Program is to increase the number of healthcare providers that prescribe time in nature at parks. Spending time in nature has shown to improve physical and mental wellness and help prevent and manage chronic conditions. The program is a free intervention that uses parks to positively influence health outcomes.





# TEXAS Pharmacy

Students from the University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy collaborated with The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) to develop this Healthcare Provider toolkit for the Parks Prescription Program. This will provide you with the background information regarding health benefits of spending time in nature, needs of the Austin Community, and the steps each provider will need to take to see improved health outcomes for patients.

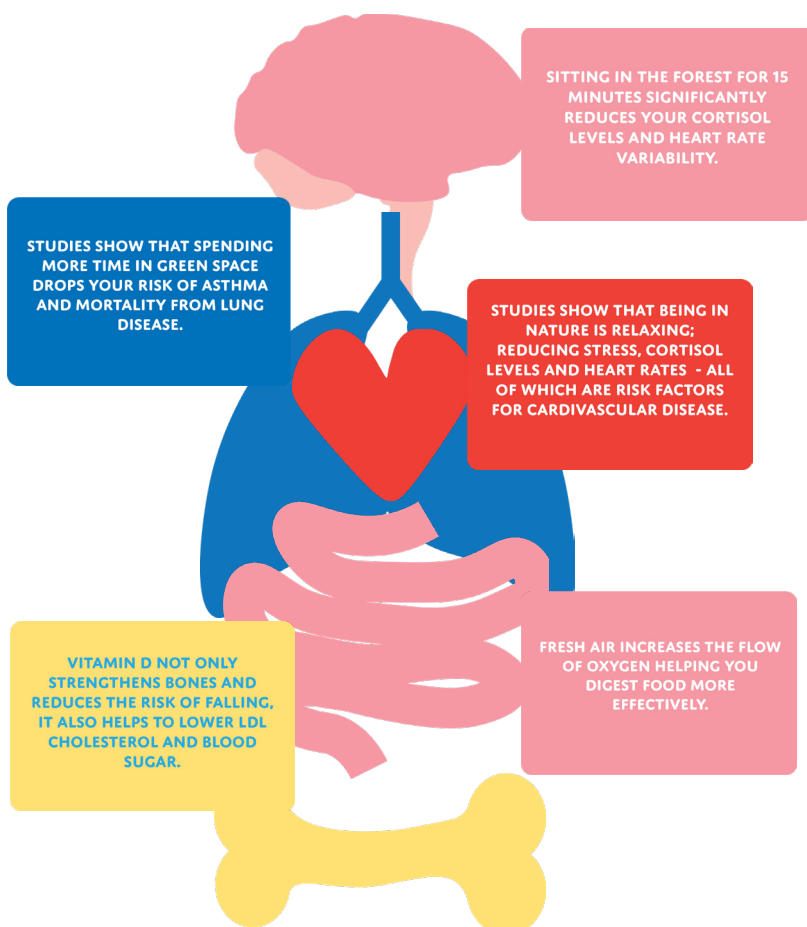
Other states have implemented similar programs and the successes of each program have involved forming partnerships with local providers and healthcare systems. For more information about The City of Austin Parks Prescription Program, go online to <http://www.austintexas.gov/parcRx>.



## BENEFITS OF TIME IN NATURE

Increased exposure to the natural environment outdoors has significant health benefits. Studies have shown that exposure to nature and nature therapy can help:

- Decrease stress and anxiety
- Decrease blood pressure in patients with hypertension
- Improve sleep duration and quality
- Improve blood glucose levels and insulin resistance
- Decrease risk of certain types of cancer
- Improve bone health
- Improve attention and executive function



The Parks Prescription Program is a non-pharmacological opportunity for patients to not only improve their health outcomes, but also enjoy the activities and amenities at the park. Additionally, the program is a free intervention that utilizes local parks in Austin.

# SUCCESS STORIES NATIONWIDE



## Bellingham, WA

- In 1 year, increased participants from 12 to 51 health providers
- Doctors noticed how beneficial the program was for patients and encouraged other doctors to join



## Westminister, CO

- Patients were provided a free, 30-day pass to any Westminister recreation facility
- Patients reported an increased awareness of their diet, exercise habits, and confidence to reach their goals



## Philadelphia, PA

- Partnered with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, U.S. Forest Service, and Schuylkill Center
- Success was based off of catering to the target population and including services that were specific to the patient population



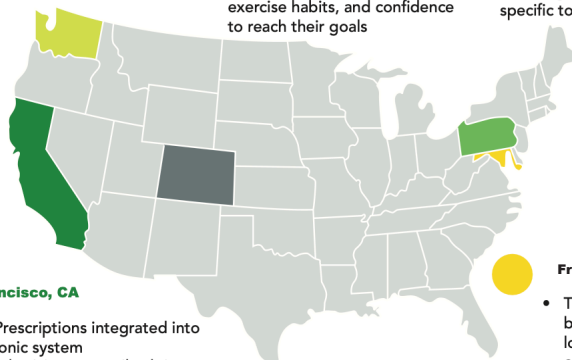
## San Francisco, CA

- Park Prescriptions integrated into electronic system
- 100+ physicians prescribed time spent in nature to children with chronic illnesses
- Example Rx: Must hike at least one trail at a natural park every month



## Frederick County, MD

- The key to their success: built relationships with local doctors, non-profit organizations, and corporate businesses for support and ideas



## OVERCOMING PATIENT BARRIERS

### TIME

City of Austin Parks & Recreation Department has

- 300 parks open 7 days a week, 5am-10pm
- Over 227 trails, 35 swimming pools, 26 recreation and senior centers
- 147 playgrounds, 20,254 acres of green space

### TRANSIT

PARD's goal is to ensure residents living in the urban core should be within

- 1/4 mile (5 minute walk) of a publicly-accessible and child-friendly park
- 1/2 mile (10 minute walk) for those outside the urban core

### MOTIVATION

- Social: encourage finding a workout buddy and quality time with family
- Mental: reduce stress and improve sleep
- Physical: improve or maintain health, lower blood pressure, and building strength

## STEP 1

### ASSESS YOUR PATIENT

1. Assess if your patient will benefit from a park prescription
  - Target Populations to consider are patients with: hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, anxiety, depression or insomnia.
2. If time permits, determine and discuss barriers, concerns, and goals with patient, if any.
3. If your patient may benefit from spending time in nature, give them a park prescription.

## STEP 2

### GIVE YOUR PATIENT A PARK PRESCRIPTION

1. Once you determine your patient may benefit from spending time in nature, give the patient a PARDRX and a My Austin Parks (MAP) Guide.



## STEP 3: FOLLOW UP & MATERIALS

# PROVIDERS



# PATIENTS



## FOLLOW UP

**COMPLETE  
SURVEY AND  
PROVIDE  
FEEDBACK**



**SIGN-UP  
FOR PARDRX  
MONTHLY  
NEWSLETTER**



## MATERIALS

1. **HEALTHCARE PROVIDER TOOLKIT**
2. **PARKS PRESCRIPTION QUICK GUIDE**

- Can be printed to post in the office for easy reference for your staff and healthcare team members.

1. **PREWRITTEN PARDRX PAD WITH A QR CODE LEADING TO A PATIENT SURVEY.**
2. **TRIFOLD MAP (MY AUSTIN PARK) GUIDE CONTAINS INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL PARKS AND THEIR AMENITIES.**

Or to view digital map visit:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/pardrx>

# PRESCRIPTION PAD



An Austin Parks & Recreation Health Promotions Program

## NATURE'S SIDE EFFECTS



BETTER MOOD



IMPROVED HEART HEALTH



INCREASED ENERGY



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



IMPROVED MEMORY



IMPROVED SLEEP



LONGER LIFE



REDUCTION OF PAIN

### Nature Facts

#### Active Ingredients

- Trees
- Fresh Air
- Grass
- Lakes and Rivers

#### Purpose

Provides oxygen and shade, nice place to read a book.  
Picks up your spirits and your kite.  
Great place for a picnic or rolling around in.  
Taking a nice cooling dip. Learn a new water sport.

#### Uses may relieve the symptoms of

- Cardiovascular diseases
- Diabetes
- Stress and Depression

- ADHD, ADD
- High Blood Pressure

#### Warnings

##### When using this product

- may increase your energy.
- may reduce your stress and anxiety.
- you may find yourself in a better mood.
- there may be a reduction in your pain.
- heart health may improve.
- you may experience a longer life.
- Stress may be relieved within 2 minutes of exposure to nature.

#### Directions

- Talk with your doctor.
- Spend 2 hours a week in nature 20+ minutes at a time.
- Dress for the weather.
- Keep hydrated and treat nature with respect.



Scan the QR code to receive more information on Austin Parks events and sign-up for updates on how nature can benefit you at [austintexas.gov/page/parks-prescription](http://austintexas.gov/page/parks-prescription).

# PARKS PRESCRIPTION QUICK GUIDE

## Step 1

- Assess whether the patient would benefit from a Parks prescription.
  - Does the patient get less than 60 minutes of physical activity each week?
  - Do they have a chronic condition that would benefit from time in nature?
    - Diabetes
    - Hypertension
    - Hyperlipidemia
    - Mental illnesses

## Step 2:

- Prescribe a Parks prescription for physical activity or time in nature that is feasible for the patient. Parks Prescription pads will be provided by the Parks & Recreation Department and there is a digital version. Examples:
  - Take a 30-minute walk to a nearby park or walk around your neighborhood three times a week.
  - Read a book or meditate outdoors in a park.
  - Ride your bike around a park or the neighborhood for 20 minutes three times a week.

## Step 3:

- Hand the patient the resources provided to you.
  - Map of parks.

## Step 4:

- Complete the QR code below to log patient demographics for our research and give input about what we can do to **improve this experience for providers and patients.**



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

## WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN:

- Partnering with the Parks and Recreation Department in hosting an event in the park?
- Collaborating with other organizations aligned with the work and mission of the Parks Prescription Program?
- Connecting with Community Partners to share resources.

If you have questions or need additional materials please contact

Jill Habegger-Cain

Health Promotions Coordinator

City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department

[jill.habegger-cain@austintexas.gov](mailto:jill.habegger-cain@austintexas.gov)

512-974-3907

# PARKS PRESCRIPTION

